

Message Text

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43

ACTION EUR-25

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AMEMBASSY LONDON

USMISSION NATO

AMEMBASSY APRIS

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

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USNATO FOR S/S

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TAGS: PFOR, CH, UR, US

SUBJ: SOVIET NEGOTIATOR RETURNS TO PEKING

REF: WARSAW 3570

1. PRAVDA PUBLISHES ON JUNE 26 BOTH THE TASS ANNOUNCEMENT OF
DEPFONMIN ILICHEV'S RETURN TO PEKING FOR CONTINUATION OF SINO-
SOVIET BORDER TALKS AND A 5-PARAGRAPH TASS SUMMARY OF LENGTHY
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ZYCIE WARSZAWY ARTICLE ON SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS (REFTEL).

2. MOSCOW-BASED AMERICAN NEWSMAN TELLS US THAT PARIS "FRANCE SOIR" IN PAST FEW DAYS CARRIED ARTICLE BY VIKTOR LOUIS WHICH ASSERTS THAT RECENT VISITORS TO SINO-SOVIET BORDER ARE IMPRESSED WITH FEELING OF TENSION. LOUIS ALSO REPORTEDLY SAYS SOVIET PRESS HAS BEGUN TO ALLUDE TO 1969 BORDER INCIDENTS -- AN ASSERTION WE CANNOT CONFIRM FROM ANY RECENT PRESS MATERIALS.

3. COMMENT: WARSAW ARTICLE AND LOUIS PIECE APPEAR TO BE PART OF PROPAGANDA BARRAGE DESIGNED TO SUPPORT ILICHEV'S POSITION UPON RETURNING TO PEKING AFTER AN ABSENCE OF NEARLY A YEAR. ILICHEV UNDOUBTEDLY CARRIES SOME NEW SOVIET INITIATIVE AIMED AT DISPLAYING FORWARD MOVEMENT AND SOVIET REASONABLENESS. TIMING IS CLEARLY RELATED TO U.S.-SOVIET SUMMIT. IT WILL BE RECALLED THAT SOVIETS OFFERED PEKING A NUCLEAR NON-USE OF FORCE TREATY AND PROPOSED A SINO-SOVIET SUMMIT MEETING JUST AT THE TIME OF BREZHNEV'S VISIT TO U.S. LAST YEAR.

4. IF MOSCOW IN FACT COMES UP WITH A NEW PACKAGE, WE WONDER WHETHER PEKING WILL BE ANY MORE RECEPTIVE THAN BEFORE. CHINESE CONTINUE TO HOLD SOVIET HELICOPTER CREW THAT STRAYED INTO SINKIANG IN MARCH, DESPITE REPEATED SOVIET DEMARCHES IN BOTH CAPITALS. POSITIVE MOVEMENT TOWARD RELEASE OF CREWMEN WOULD BE A GOOD SIGN, BUT IN ABSENCE OF SUCH GESTURE WE WOULD RATE ILICHEV'S PROSPECTS AS POOR. HIS RETURN TO PEKING NEVERTHELESS SHOWS THAT BREZHNEV FEELS COMPELLED AT THIS JUNCTURE TO KEEP UP AN ACTIVE EFFORT TOWARD NORMALIZATION WITH PEKING, ACHIEVEMENT OF WHICH WOULD STRENGTHEN HIS HAND BOTH AT HOME AND VIS-A-VIS THE U.S.

STOESSEL

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